

DPH Confirms First Pediatric Flu Case for 2018-2019 Season

DOVER – The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is reporting the state's first laboratory-confirmed case of influenza in a child for the 2018-2019 flu season. The case involves a 5-year-old from Sussex County. This brings the total number of flu cases this season to six, as of Oct. 5, 2018. In addition to the pediatric case, the other cases include two New Castle County residents: a 40-year-old male and a 26-year-old female; and three Kent County residents: a 72-year-old female, and 70-year-old and 44-year-old males. There are two main types of influenza (flu) virus – types A and B – that routinely spread in people and are responsible for seasonal flu outbreaks each year. Five cases are type A, and the pediatric case is type B.

DPH urges all Delawareans 6 months of age and older to get vaccinated soon if they have not yet done so. The flu is easy to transmit and you can get it even from seemingly healthy, but unvaccinated, children and adults. Since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that protect against influenza virus infection, it is important to get the flu shot as early as possible to give your body time to build immunity. The official start of the 2018-2019 didn't begin until September 30, but by then, 12 laboratory-confirmed cases already had been reported in September. The cases, which occurred statewide, included five pediatric cases and one hospitalization.

During the 2017-2018 flu season, Delaware recorded 9,051 flu cases, the highest number of laboratory-confirmed flu cases since record-keeping began in 2005. Over 1,200 people were hospitalized due to the flu and 35 people died from flu complications.

“Now is the time to get your flu vaccine,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “Vaccinations not only prevent people from getting the flu, but they can reduce the severity of flu illness and prevent visits to the doctor, clinic, emergency room, hospitalizations, and serious consequences (including death) from influenza. While the vaccine is recommended for people of all age groups, children are part of a group of individuals who are particularly susceptible to complications from flu illness, and so ensuring they are vaccinated is vitally important.” Rattay said vaccinated people have less chance of missing family, school and work events due to influenza illness.

Getting the flu vaccine is easy. Flu vaccines are offered through physician offices, many pharmacies and some grocery stores. While not all physicians’ offices may have their vaccine supply in yet, you can still locate where flu vaccines near you are being offered. Just Google “CDC flu finder” and enter a ZIP code. DPH will also offer various other flu clinics throughout the season. A schedule can be found at <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/fluclinics.html>.

In addition to getting the flu vaccine, Delawareans can prevent the spread of the flu and other respiratory illness with good hygiene. Wash hands often with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers with 60 percent alcohol. Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues and dispose of tissues immediately. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your inner elbow since droplets from a sneeze can travel up to 6 feet. Stay 6 feet away from others who are coughing or sneezing, and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Get enough sleep and exercise, manage stress, and eat healthy.

Flu symptoms come on suddenly, and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches and body aches, chills, and fatigue. Some people get complications including pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus and ear infections. Those sick with the flu should stay home from work, school, and

other gatherings and not return until they have been free of fever – with temperature less than 100° F (37.8° C), without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours.

Those ill with the flu should avoid close contact with well people in the household, drink plenty of water and other clear liquids and treat fever and cough with over-the-counter medicines. Those who are very sick, pregnant or have a medical condition like asthma should call their doctors for antiviral medicines to make the illness milder, hasten recovery, and prevent serious complications, hospitalizations and even death.

For more information about the flu, visit flu.delaware.gov or <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.